(b) the likely stock position as on 1st January, 2005; and

(c) whether the depleted stock position is sufficient for the country to withstand the present drought like situation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) As on 1st July, 2004 the stock position of wheat was 191.52 lakh MTs and that of rice was 107.63 lakh MTs.

(b) The likely stock position of wheat and rice as on 1st January, 2005 will be 104 lakh MTs and 126 lakh MTs respectively.

(c) The stock position of wheat and rice as on 1.7.2004 was 299.15 lakh MTs which is above the prescribed Buffer Norms. (Wheat 143 lakh MTs and Rice 100 lakh MTs). This will withstand the present drought situation.

Production of sugar

1819. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:
PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA:

Will the Minister qf CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether sugar production in the country would be drastically affected this year because of poor monsoon;

(b) if so, the total production of sugar during the last two years and to what extent it is likely to be less during 2004-05;

(c) the steps Government propose to take to meet the shortage; and

(d) whether Government propose to import sugar to meet the shortage?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) and (b) The estimated production of sugar in the sugar season 2003-2004 is 138 lakh MTs as against 201.32 lakh tonnes in the season 2002-2003. This reduction is on account of drought and

pest infestation in certain States of the country. For the same reasons, the sugar production in the year 2004-2005 is likely to be less than 2003-2004.

(c) and (d) As adequate stock of sugar is available in the country in 2003-2004 (sugar season) for domestic consumption, no proposal for import of sugar is under consideration of the Government.

Smart card system

1820. SHRI SANJAY RAJARAM RAUT: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Tenth Plan Working Group on Public Distribution System and Food Security has recommended introduction of smart card system in the form of a credit or debit card instead of the existing ration cards to eliminate the rampant corruption in the PDS in the country;

(b) if so, Government's views thereon;

(c) whether Government propose to introduce such smart card system in the country; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) The Tenth Plan Working Group on the Public Distribution System and Food Security had recommended introduction of Smart Card system in the form of credit/debit card instead of the existing ration cards in the PDS in the Country.

(b) to (d) Based on the recommendations of the Working Group a Pilot Project on implementation of Smart Cards in PDS, later on renamed as "implementation of Food Credit Cards in PDS" has been formulated for implementation in selected districts/States. The Scheme is being implemented on a pilot basis in Vidisha, Kangra and Ernakulam districts of Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Kerala respectively. The introduction of the Food Credit Cards in the whole country will depend on the outcome of the Pilot Project.